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Colonoscopy

What is a Colonoscopy?

The term “colonoscopy” means looking inside the colon. The doctor checks the lining of your colon (large bowel) using a colonoscope. The colonoscopy is a thin flexible tube with a light and a tiny video camera on the end that is moved through your colon. The doctor sees your colon on a TV screen as he guides the colonoscope through your colon. If your doctor sees a growth in your colon, he can take a small piece of it (a biopsy) or remove the growth. The biopsy or the removed growth can be checked for cancer.

Colonoscopy is a safe way to evaluate problems such as bleeding, pain and to screen for growths, called polyps that can turn into cancer.

How Do I Prepare for Colonoscopy?

There are important steps that you must take to prepare for colonoscopy. Be sure to read and follow these instructions. The colon must be cleaned out completely so that the whole colon can be seen.

1. Don't eat solid foods for one to two days before the exam. Drink only clear liquids like water or broth. Do not drink or eat anything after midnight before the test.
2. Use the medicine given to you as instructed to clean out your colon.
3. You must have someone drive you home after the test. You **cannot** drive yourself. If you don't have a driver, your exam will be cancelled!

What Can You Expect During a Colonoscopy?

Before the procedure, an IV line will be placed to give you medicine, which will make you relaxed and sleepy. This medicine allows you to be awake, but it often keeps you from remembering much about the procedure.

Once you are relaxed, your doctor will do a rectal exam and then gently insert the colonoscope. Because the doctor needs a clear view, air is used to expand the colon. This may cause you to feel some pressure or cramps. If a polyp is found, it may be removed. The exam usually takes about 30 minutes.

What Can You Expect After Your Colonoscopy?

Sometimes people have bloating or mild cramping which usually resolves within 24 hours. After the test you will be cared for in a recovery area until the medicine has worn off. At this time your doctor may tell you about the results of your colonoscopy or may give you a follow-up appointment to discuss the results. You will be given instructions about getting back to your normal diet and routine.

What Are Possible Complications From a Colonoscopy?

Although colonoscopy is a safe exam, complications can occur. These include perforation and bleeding. A perforation is a puncture of the colon wall that may need an operation to fix. When a biopsy or polyp removal is done, the area may bleed.

Be sure to ask any questions you may have about the procedure. TCRHCC 5/06